



**Intervention by Msgr. John Putzer, Chargé d’Affaires, a.i.
Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other
International Organizations in Geneva
at the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur
on the rights of indigenous peoples – Item 3
48th Session of the Human Rights Council
*Geneva, 27 September 2021***

Madam President,

The Delegation of the Holy See takes note of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous people and shares the concern that economic recovery efforts are having a disproportionately negative impact on indigenous communities. Indeed, many of these measures have prioritized and supported the expansion of business operations at the expense of indigenous peoples, their lands and the environment.

Indigenous peoples account for 5 percent of the total global population and yet they make up 15 percent of the world’s population living in extreme poverty. As a consequence, indigenous people have experienced heightened vulnerability during the COVID-19 pandemic, the full impact of which is yet to be seen. In addition, pre-existing issues for indigenous communities, such as food insecurity, have been exacerbated by pandemic lockdowns.

Madam President,

In this regard, the Holy See wishes to highlight the importance of promoting an inclusive dialogue in order to effectively involve indigenous communities in recovery efforts. Emergency responses and recovery efforts benefit from honest dialogue between indigenous peoples and national authorities, with a view to implementing culturally respectful measures oriented to the common good of all.

Indeed, indigenous peoples play a fundamental role in the conservation and transmission of traditional knowledge and practices that can contribute to increased food security, health, well-being and recovery from the pandemic. The ongoing global health crisis, then, should be an opportunity to work further towards transformational and green economic policies and systems that can reconcile health and nature. In this sense, the cultural traditions of indigenous people and their respect and connectedness with natural resources and lands represent a valuable example to consider.

Madam President,

As Pope Francis has said, “it is a question of promoting a development that does not take consumption as a means and an end, but one that truly cares for the environment... This is integral ecology, in which social justice is combined with the protection of the planet”.¹

¹ Pope Francis, Message to the organizers and participants at the fifth global meeting of the indigenous peoples’ forum, 2 February 2021.

In concluding, the Delegation of the Holy See reiterates the importance of promoting and protecting the cultural values, patrimony and human rights of indigenous people, as well as to provide them with opportunities to continue to remain protagonists of their own cultural and social development. From this perspective, the value of face-to-face dialogue, carried out in good faith, between State authorities and indigenous peoples becomes essential to provide mutual support and find solutions oriented to the common good.

Thank you, Madam President.